

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell released the following statement regarding President Barack Obama's speech on health insurance reform:

I hope tonight's address by President Obama serves as a spark for members of Congress to come together to bring meaningful reform to our health insurance system. While this intensely personal issue has understandably evoked impassioned responses from across the political spectrum, if we all tone down the rhetoric and really listen to each other we will find that there is already a great deal of agreement on which we can build meaningful reform.

I would like to see Congress accept President Obama's challenge to put politics aside so that we can fix our broken health insurance system. More and more families are losing access to the care they need and our economy is suffering as businesses struggle to cope with escalating costs. With the average American family paying an extra \$1,100 in insurance premiums a year to pay for the shifted cost of covering the uninsured we are reaching a crisis point.

I agree with many Republicans and Democrats who do not want the government to take over the entire health care system. If you like your current insurance, you should be able to keep it. Reform should provide more choice, not less. I hope Congress and the President will engage in an open, honest debate and remember that ultimately everyone is aiming for the same thing: the best, most affordable health care for us and our loved ones.